

Jersey City Hospital, Powerhouse and Laundry
(Jersey City Medical Center, Powerhouse
and Laundry)
112-114 Clifton Place
Jersey City
Hudson County
New Jersey

HABS No. NJ-891-B

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NJ,
9-JERC1,
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAN AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Mid-Atlantic Region, National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

JERSEY CITY HOSPITAL, POWERHOUSE
AND LAUNDRY

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(Jersey City Medical Center, Powerhouse and Laundry)

Location: Block bounded by Cornelison Avenue on the east, Clifton Place on the south, Baldwin Avenue on the west and Montgomery Street on the north, Jersey City, Hudson County, New Jersey

Present Owner: City of Jersey City

Present Use: Demolished March, 1982; a parking facility now stands on the site

Significance: Built under the political patronage of three different mayors, the design of the Jersey City Hospital complex (Jersey City Medical Center) can be divided into two distinct phases, the first low-rise and generally subdued and the second more high-rise and decorative. The same architect was responsible for both manifestations, however. Part of the early, low-scale version of the Jersey City Hospital, the powerhouse and laundry were representative of the initial stage of important Jersey City architect John T. Rowland's career, and the architectural preferences of two city mayors, Mark Fagan and Otto Wittpenn. Later buildings of the hospital were influenced by the ideas of Mayor Frank Hague.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of construction: circa 1918 (a second power house was constructed circa 1930)
2. Architect: John T. Rowland (for more information on Rowland, please see HABS NJ-891-A)
3. Original owner: City of Jersey City
4. Original plans and construction: The C.M. Hopkins Platbook of Jersey City, 1928, shows that the plan of this complex was a contiguous grouping of rectangular buildings (one to four stories) in the shape of two linked L's.
5. Alterations and additions: The early powerhouse/laundry structure was expanded about 1920 to the edge of the Palisade hill. This addition continued the style, material and scale of the original. A further adjacent addition in 1931 expanded the complex down the hill to Cornelison Avenue. This second addition is very different from the original in style; it is Art

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Deco with large windows and elaborate stone ornament. The two tall brick chimneys in front of the power house as it appeared in 1924 were removed and replaced about 1931 by a brick ten-story chimney, still in existence, on Cornelison Avenue connecting with the 1931 addition. A small, brick, one-story building was added to the northwest corner of the power house at an unknown date (after 1936). Vandalism, after about 1979, depleted the laundry building of metal and/or porcelain detail and fixtures; almost all windows were broken. By 1982 the powerhouse was deteriorating, excess space, basically unused. The principal boiler and engine facilities were in the 1931 additions.

- B. Historical Context: The laundry building was vacated by 1979, while the powerhouse partially functioned as storage space until its demolition. For more information on the Jersey City Hospital, please see HABS No. NJ-891-A.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Designed in a Tuscan villa style, the powerhouse/laundry complex consists of two interlocked L-shaped units. The powerhouse, the main unit, is two stories with a basement, with the first story being as high as two stories, since it contains the engine room.
2. Condition of fabric: fair to poor

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions:
 - a. Powerhouse: an "L" shape of two units approximately 40' x 90' and 50' x 70'; 50' plus tall
 - b. Laundry: an "L" shape of two units 40' x 60' and 30' x 45'; 50' tall
2. Foundations: concrete
3. Walls: load-bearing brick with face-brick
4. Structural system: reinforced concrete floors carried on steel beams

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5. Chimney: Ten-story brick chimney on octagonal base at ground-level on Cornelison Avenue (still existing) connected to the powerhouse; built about 1930.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Each of the four buildings of the two "L"s had at least one entry at ground level. The entry on the north facade of the laundry had a tiled awning and was beside the projecting five-story elevator shaft. Thus, some emphasis was given to this doorway. Other doorways have less definition.
 - b. Windows: The powerhouse generally had one rectangular, multi-light casement window in each bay in each story. The (straight) sills were stone. Sizes varied slightly, and the basement window heads were segmental-arch, while the middle window at the top story of each of the three gable ends had a full-arch, brick with keystone, blind window-heads. The window head of the elevator shaft tower (south facade) was full arch. Before 1931 when the new adjoining powerhouse was built down the slope of the hill, the eastern and northern facades had windows at the two sub-basement levels.

The first and second stories of both units of the laundry had one segmental arch multi-light casement window per bay, while the top story had expanses of multi-light industrial windows. The projecting five-story elevator tower (north facade) had a segmental arch window on the lower two stories, and a vertical grouping of windows under a round arch window-head in the central stories and three small, round-arch windows on each of the four sides of the tower's top. Before 1931, the two sub-basements on the eastern and northern ends had exposed windows.

7. Roof
 - a. Shape, covering: The powerhouse and courtyard buildings had pitched roofs with tile covering. The elevator towers (north and south facades) had pyramidal, tile roofs.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: The roofs had broad overhangs supported by wood brackets. The two gable ends of the eastern unit of the powerhouse had molded stone parapet walls.
 - c. Dormers, towers, ventilators: The laundry had five small dormers with pitched roofs, one on the north facade, one on the east facade, and two on the south facade. The two elevator shafts were like Tuscan towers, or campaniles. One

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was on the south facade of the powerhouse and extended one story up from the roof surface, and one was on the south facade of the laundry and was treated as an attached five-story tower projecting from the facade wall. The top of this latter tower had a stone stringcourse of swags and a stone cornice of dentils and modillions.

The powerhouse had four large circular ventilators on the roof.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: (the following description is taken from the Tax Assessor's Records, 1938, and does not differentiate the powerhouse from the laundry.)
 - a. First floor: office, ironing-sorting room, drying room, storeroom, repair shop, refrigerating plant, morgue
 - b. Second floor: laundry storeroom, two storerooms, sewing room, laundry washroom, telephone switchboard room, telephone control room, restroom, laboratory.
 - c. Third floor (laundry): X-ray storeroom, two storerooms, laundry/ironing room, office.
 - d. Basement: linen supply room, linen storeroom, laundry washroom, engine room.
 - e. First sub-basement: boiler room, refrigerator room, ammonia room, two pump rooms
 - f. Second sub-basement: pump room, carpenter shop
2. Flooring: reinforced concrete, sometimes surfaced in hardwood, or, in restrooms, terrazzo.
3. Wall and ceiling finish: plaster, varnished wood, metal trim; toilets had marble-surfaced walls
4. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating: steam (powerhouse supplied steam heat to all the Jersey City Medical Center buildings); nine oil burners, nine furnaces
 - b. Plumbing: nine restrooms with (total) thirteen toilet bowls, five stall urinals, three showers, 17 sinks, 11 lavatory sinks.

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- c. Two elevators: one passenger, one freight, each with 2,500 lb. capacity
 - d. One mechanical refrigerating plant; engines, boilers (number unknown)
- D. Site: The powerhouse/laundry was part of the Jersey City Medical Center complex of buildings. Concrete terracing and some lawn and landscaping bordered the northwestern corner and west and south facades of the powerhouse/laundry.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Please see HABS No. NJ-891-A.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Please see HABS No. NJ-891-A.

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HABS
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